

Travel and Perception in Byzantium

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For Dr. Jon Sklar

This paper presents a critical reading of a group of Byzantine literary texts. Despite their heterogeneity in terms of genre, these texts are closely linked by their authors' common central preoccupation and by, broadly speaking, their contemporaneity: they all fall within the orbit of Byzantine travel literature from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a period from which, in contrast to the immediately preceding centuries, travel accounts survive.¹

Our traveling companions in the course of this paper will be five Byzantine men; our special interest, the multiple levels of their perceptions of reality as reflected in their texts.

Our first traveler is Nicholas Mouzalon, who was sent by Emperor Alexios Komnenos from Constantinople to Cyprus as the new archbishop of the island. Mouzalon came into conflict with just about every representative of authority, ecclesiastical and civil, on the island. It was not too long before he abandoned his post and Cyprus, returned home, and—in 1111—wrote a long apologetic poem setting out the reasons for his resignation and, in the process, describing his journey and stay in Cyprus.² Our second traveler, Constantine Manasses, also recorded his traveler's impressions in verse. In his *Hodoiporikon* he described the long journey which in 1161/2 took him and the *sebastos* John Kontostephanos on a secret imperial mission from Constantinople to Palestine. After a pilgrimage there, the *sebastos* and Manasses parted company in Tyre. Manasses

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¹See A. P. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1985), 151–54. On Byzantine interest in travel and geography see also N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1983), 196, 199, 203; A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1982), 42–43. A. Kazhdan, in collaboration with S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), 120. A discussion of the genre of each text falls outside the scope of this paper, but it is worth noting here that at any rate such a discussion would not, as far as I am aware, prejudice in any significant way the findings of this study.

²“Ἡ παραίτησις Νικολάου τοῦ Μουζάλωνος ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Κύπρου,” ed. S. Doanidou, *Ἑλληνικά* 7 (1934), 109–50; hereafter cited as *Mouzalon*.

went to Cyprus, where he stayed as a guest of the governor of the island. He left for a short trip to Isauria and then returned to the island where he was subsequently reunited with John Kontostephanos, and finally returned to Constantinople.³ Some eleven years later (ca. 1173) our third traveler, Gregory Antiochos, also set off from Constantinople, but in a direction opposite to that of our previous two travelers: in the company of soldiers he journeyed to Bulgaria. Two of his letters from Bulgaria back to Constantinople survive and record his experiences. The first was written in Sardica in late winter; the second, in an unspecified neighboring region in early summer. Both were addressed to Gregory's former tutor, Eustathios of Thessaloniki.⁴ A few years later (1177), one John Phokas went on a pilgrimage to Palestine, and on returning home he wrote an account of his journey.⁵ It was, finally, a few years after the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204 that our fifth traveler, Nicholas Mesarites, traveled from Nicaea to Constantinople, and subsequently returned to Nicaea via Pylai, Nikomedia, and Neakome. In a letter to the abbot and the monks of the monastery of Evergetes in Constantinople he gave an account of his return journey (1208).⁶

These travelers' accounts have been combed by modern scholars in search of "objective" information reflecting *factual reality*.⁷ On the other hand, some scholars have also recognized that the information transmitted through such accounts may well not be factually correct or exclusively preoccupied with the recording of factual reality, but that up to a point they also reflect *cultural realities*. Within any given culture, factual reality is mediated, as it were, through the system of ideologies in that culture; what emerges after this largely unconscious process is a perceived reality which is no longer factual reality pure and simple but a collectively held interpretation of it. Correspondingly, a literary text—*any* literary text—reflects perceptions of reality which, though founded upon elements of factual reality, are built with the symbolic bricks and mortar of assumptions, attitudes, and mentalities collectively held by members of the culture in which the text was produced.⁸ Furthermore, apart from the levels of factual and cul-

³"Das Hodoiporikon des Konstantin Manasses," ed. K. Horna, *BZ* 13 (1904), 313–55; hereafter cited as *Manasses*. Manasses' romance of *Aristandros and Kallithea* (contemporary or near contemporary to his *Hodoiporikon*) also—and in common with other Byzantine romances—featured traveling. See Συμβολή στη μελέτη του ποιητικού έργου του Κωνσταντίνου Μανασσή και κριτική έκδοση του μυθιστορηματός του "Τά κατ' Ἀρίστανδρον καὶ Καλλιθέαν", ed. E. Tsolakes (Thessalonica, 1967) ('Επιστημονική Ἑπετηρὶς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης 10); for discussion and bibliography of 12th-century romances see R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance* (Cambridge, 1989), 67–86, and on Manasses' romance esp. 76–77.

⁴"Deux lettres de Grégoire Antiochos écrites de Bulgarie vers 1173," ed. J. Darrouzès, *BSI* 23 (1962), 276–84; 24 (1963), 65–86; hereafter cited as *Antiochos, I* and *Antiochos, II*, respectively.

⁵Ἰωάννου τοῦ Φωκά ἐκφρασις ἐν συνόψει τῶν ἁπ' Ἀντιοχείας μέχρις Ἱεροσολύμων κάστρων καὶ χωρῶν, Συρίας Φοινίκης καὶ τῶν κατὰ Παλαιστίνην Ἀγίων Τόπων, PG 133, cols. 928–961; hereafter cited as *Phokas*.

⁶*Quellen und Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Geschichte*, ed. A. Heisenberg (London, 1973), part 2, section 3, 35–46; hereafter cited as *Mesarites*.

⁷I use the term "factual reality" with reference to events and experiences the matter of whose existence is generally indisputable and subject to independent verification, and which were recorded in a form as objective and devoid of interpretation as is possible. On the concept of "reality" see P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London, 1967).

⁸On "ideology" see J. Larraín, *The Concept of Ideology* (London, 1979); idem, *Marxism and Ideology* (London, 1983); T. Lovell, *Pictures of Reality* (London, 1980). On "culture" see C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of*

tural realities, yet another, third level of reality exists in texts: this is the level of *personal reality*, which refers to the subjective, individual perception of the author. At this level, the text acts as a vehicle which the author uses—whether consciously or unconsciously—to express primarily his or her own subjective, personal views. These are by their very nature overwhelmingly representative of an individual (the author) and not of a collectivity (a social group). The importance of this level in literary texts cannot be overestimated—yet it is only relatively recently that Byzantinists have begun to turn their attention to it, following above all (as far, at least, as the Middle and Late Byzantine periods are concerned) the ground-breaking work of Alexander Kazhdan.⁹

My suggestion is that all three of these levels of reality must be considered when reading literary texts, for if they are not, we are likely both to remain unaware of the full complexity and richness of our texts, and to misread them and draw the wrong conclusions from them.

This said, it must at once also be acknowledged that not all Byzantine literary texts contain these three levels of reality in a form which is sufficiently recognizable, extensive, and, as it were, verifiable. Thus, the tripartite reading of texts proposed here is neither easy nor indeed always possible. For instance, the personal level may have been suppressed or disguised to an extent which makes it practically impossible to trace it in a text (because, for example, the author wished to appear to be “objective,” or because he or she was following the stylistic prescriptions of a genre which actively encouraged the “impersonalization” of the text.)¹⁰ Again, proof of the existence and understanding of the nature of any of these levels in a text usually depends on comparison with other similar and—at least roughly—contemporary sources; and these, we may simply not possess.

On the other hand, in many literary texts the factual, the cultural, and the personal are traceable. Our task then becomes possible, though far from easy since the boundaries between the three are rarely unequivocally drawn: in texts, as much as in everyday life, they are both inextricably linked and overlapping. For instance, it can never be the

Cultures (London, 1975), 3–54, esp. 44. On “symbolism” see D. Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1975).

⁹Kazhdan has consistently drawn attention to the individualism of Byzantine authors and texts on the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. Note the general approach and in particular the seminal comments in, e.g., Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power*, esp. 34, 160 (“individualism without freedom”), ch. 8, esp. 170–72; Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, esp. Prooemium, vii–ix; Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, esp. 210 ff. The relevant findings of Kazhdan have been supported by those of other scholars: see, e.g., P. Magdalino, “Byzantine Snobbery,” in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (Oxford, 1984) (BAR International Series 221), 58–78, esp. 62 (“chronic individualism of Byzantine society”); idem, “The Literary Perception of Everyday Life in Byzantium: Some General Considerations and the Case of John Apokaukos,” *BSI* 57/1 (1987), 28–38; M. Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople,” in *Byzantine Aristocracy*, ed. Angold, 173–201; R. Cormack, “Aristocratic Patronage of the Arts in Eleventh and Twelfth Century Byzantium,” in *ibid.*, 158–72. Of more recent studies, see D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford, 1988), esp. 34–82 (on Theophylact of Ochrid).

¹⁰The latter appears to have been the case, for example, with Byzantine monastic *typika*, whose strongly legalistic nature discouraged extensive personal expression in all but the most irrepressibly individualistic of authors, most notably St. Christodoulos of Patmos, St. Athanasios of Athos, St. Neophytos the Recluse. See C. Galatariotou, “Byzantine *kletorika typika*: A Comparative Study,” *REB* 45 (1987), 77–138, esp. 133–36.

case that a passage is *exclusively* referable to the personal level of reality, since in civilized society no personal expression can ever be completely free of cultural influence (the very use of words, and the words used, are already in themselves powerful cultural indicators). Equally, no author can possibly act as a kind of cultural robot which, devoid of personal bias, reflects in writing an exclusively collective, cultural consensus; nor can he or she ever produce records of purely “objective observations”—a contradiction in terms—totally devoid of cultural or personal preoccupations.

Nevertheless, some measure of differentiation between the three levels of reality is usually possible in literary texts, and this appears to be especially true of literary texts of the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. The travelers’ accounts at the center of this study represent one such example. It is important to recognize that because of the inevitably overlapping nature of the three levels we can only discuss their presence in texts in comparative terms, in terms of approximation and degree. Thus in the pages that follow reference to any one of the three levels does not imply the presence of that level and that level alone in the passage under discussion. It implies instead that the passage addresses primarily, overwhelmingly—though not exclusively—one level of reality, whose registered presence is so strong as to obscure or even nearly totally eclipse the presence of either or both of the other two levels in that same passage.

Not infrequently, some elements of each of the three levels of reality can be easily identified in a text. This is particularly the case with elements of factual reality. For instance, there appears to be no reason for doubting the factual reality of Mouzalon’s evidence that with good weather conditions the sea voyage from Constantinople to Cyprus took ten days, or for doubting Mesarites’ evidence regarding the ruined and impoverished state of Neakome shortly after 1204. Again, Manasses’ description of Ptolemais as a “killer city” in which illnesses constantly broke out resulting in many deaths is essentially a recording of factual reality, corroborated by the very similar evidence which John Phokas gives about that same city.¹¹

Of our travelers, John Phokas provides the most simple and matter-of-fact account. He is careful to describe in some detail the geography of Palestine, the towns, the villages, the distances between them, the holy sites he visited. As we would expect, such descriptions are not entirely devoid of personal and cultural bias,¹² but we can safely say that Phokas’ text contains a bare minimum of such bias. We can tell from his account no more than that he is a Byzantine provincial, he is pious, he has great respect for Emperor Manuel I Komnenos and his patronage of religious institutions.¹³ He is more

¹¹*Mouzalon*, 119.259–266; *Mesarites*, 45.4–11; *Manasses*, 328.93–98, 342.9, 342.16–20 (quote from 328.93); *Phokas*, col. 933, para. 9. References to factual realities are also contained in *Phokas*, *passim*, and *Mesarites*, *passim* (in both instances esp. regarding their descriptions of towns and passages); *Mouzalon*, 116.163–175, 117.205, 137.916 (the second phrase); *Manasses*, 327.66–67, 329.125–139, 343.42–60; *Antiochos*, I, 278.10–11, 279.25–32, 280.71–75, 280.77–81.

¹²For example, cultural bias is particularly—and predictably—evident in descriptions of works of art: Phokas’ descriptions of the Nativity mosaic at the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Annunciation mosaic at Joseph’s house are verbatim transcriptions of *ekphraseis* of mosaics (of the Nativity and the Annunciation mosaics at St. Sergius in Gaza) by the 6th-century orator Choricius. See H. Maguire, “Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Art,” *DOP* 28 (1974), 111–40, esp. 116.

¹³*Phokas*, col. 944, para. 14; col. 952, para. 22; col. 953, para. 24; cols. 953–957, para. 27.

than barely literate, though the extent of his education is also clearly limited: comparison of his text with our other travel accounts clearly indicates that he was in no way a member of the metropolitan aristocratic-intellectual, highly educated elite to which our other travelers to a lesser or greater extent belonged. It is clear that within the perimeters of his culture John Phokas' text represents above all a factual account of his travels.

This is not the case with our other travelers' texts, all of which bear much more indelibly—though in varying degrees—the traces both of a collective cultural identity shared by their authors and of the individual personality of each writer. It is a commonplace, but still has to be said, that the cultural environment in which we are steeped greatly affects the way we perceive both our selves and external reality. We have long known (especially through work in the fields of social anthropology, political science, sociology, psychology) that cultural and ideological influences work not only at the conscious but also—and most powerfully—at the unconscious level. Thus, the members of a culture commonly remain largely unaware of the collective bias of their perceptions: they do not believe them to be culturally created and biased interpretations of the world (which is what they truly are); they believe them instead to be objective and true descriptions of the one, “real” state of affairs. They will provide logical, apparently objective, reasons for explaining their beliefs, when in fact what they are really providing is a set of rationalizations for what is—whether they recognize it or not—cultural bias. Similar mechanisms of defense and denial operate at the personal level of perception, as work especially in the field of psychoanalysis has shown. Thus, individuals also all too frequently remain unaware of the personal bias which informs their perceptions; they are prone to endowing their views with an “objective” status; they choose to ignore or deny the power of conscious and especially unconscious processes in formulating their supposedly “objectively based,” but in fact subjectively biased, perceptions. When, occasionally, the individual actually has some insight into the extent of the personal bias which informs his or her opinions, he or she is frequently unable to do much about it other than to simply acknowledge that bias. As we are about to see, all these characteristics, at the cultural and the personal levels, are borne by our travelers' texts.

Leaving aside John Phokas for the moment, let us consider our other four travelers. Since, as we well know, they all shared a common sociocultural background, it would be reasonable to assume that where their otherwise very different accounts correlate, their agreement represents a common cultural expression: a Byzantine metropolitan, aristocratic, and/or highly educated perception. Close comparative reading of the accounts of Nicholas Mouzalon, Constantine Manasses, Gregory Antiochos, and Nicholas Mesarites shows that these four individuals indeed had much in common.

For a start, the minute they are on the road, they all want to go back to their *patris*; and this *patris* is most definitely not the empire, but their home town: Constantinople (or after 1204—in Mesarites' case—Nicaea). The comparisons between the *patris* and the place in which our travelers find themselves are ubiquitous, and in all these comparisons the wish to return is explicitly or implicitly stated, with an insistence bordering, in some cases, on the obsessive. Manasses, for instance, finds the factual reality of his absence from Constantinople so unbearable that he repeatedly turns away from it and replaces it with fantasy. No less than six times he interrupts the narrative flow of the

account of his journey to return, as it were, to Constantinople: while he is awake he daydreams that he is in Constantinople; while he is asleep he dreams that he is back; he reaches the point where he is not sure whether what his mind's eye saw was a hallucination or a dream of the Queen City.¹⁴

The truth is that none of these four travelers wanted to leave home in the first place (and this is yet another factor that sets them apart from the pilgrim John Phokas).¹⁵ They all knew that when they left Constantinople (or Nicaea) they would become foreigners, in the sense that they would find themselves in a different cultural climate, which was to them foreign and therefore inferior. They all expected, and dreaded, the feeling of cultural alienation that would engulf them. Thus, when Manasses received the shocking news that he was just about to travel, he was rendered speechless and burst into tears, howling and groaning: an extreme reaction, but one which captures something of the communally manifested metropolitan abhorrence of travel.¹⁶

In their defense, our travelers would be quick to point out that they had perfectly good reasons for loathing travel, since it was so dreadfully uncomfortable and highly dangerous. As described in their travelogues, it was truly life-threatening. Under sail there were deadly, dangerous pirates, and rough seas, as both Manasses and Mesarites tell us at great length; and if the boat did not capsize altogether, a traveler might slip and fall into the sea anyway—as happened to one of Mesarites' fellow travelers, who nearly drowned as a result. On land murderous bandits replaced the pirates, as Mesarites, again, knew only too well from bitter and terrifying personal experience.¹⁷

¹⁴Manasses, 331.207–208, 334.331–335.336, 338.112–140, 339.153–158, 340.24–28, 342.102–343.35 (esp. 342.7, 342.11–13). See also *Antiochos, I*, 278.3–11; *Antiochos, II*, 65.1–12, 65.37–66.59, 71.296–307, 73.396–398; *Mouzalon*, 133.771–139.985; *Mesarites*, 39.26, 41.27–29, 43.17–20, 46.9–11. Similar sentiments of homesickness and the urge to return home were also expressed by Theophylact, archbishop of Ochrid in Bulgaria; Michael Choniates, archbishop of Athens; John Mauropous, archbishop of Euchaita. When Stephen Skylitzes fell ill in Trebizond he chose to return to Constantinople in order to be either cured by the city's superior doctors or to die among friends in his *patris*. *Théophylacte d' Achrida: Lettres*, ed. P. Gautier (Thessalonica, 1986), 147, 149, 209, 211, 243, 255, 295, 299, 317, 403–5, 435, 469, 531 (PG 126, cols. 308, 309, 321, 324, 333, 393–396, 416, 436, 472, 508, 509, 532, 533, 549); Μιχαὴλ Ἀχομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα II, ed. S. Lampros (Athens, 1880), 44; L. Petit, "Monodie de Théodore Prodrome sur Étienne Skylitzès, métropolitain de Trebizonde," *IRAIK* 8.1–2 (1902), 1–14, esp. 13.237–234 (hereafter cited as *Skylitzes*). See Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 48, 57–58, 59, 61 (on Theophylact of Ochrid and Michael Choniates); J. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire* (London, 1937), and idem, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986), 320 (on John Mauropous and Theophylact of Ochrid).

¹⁵With the exception of John Phokas our authors traveled unwillingly, on imperial "business." (My thanks to Paul Magdalino for this observation.)

¹⁶Manasses, 327.61–328.76, who also had a prophetic dream—or rather nightmare—about traveling: 326.13–327.60; and see the comments in Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 153; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 61. Stephen Skylitzes and Theodore Prodromos also shed tears over Stephen's imminent departure for Trebizond: *Skylitzes*, 11.162–169.

¹⁷Manasses, 326.159–437.186; *Mesarites*, 36.26–39.5, 45.28–46.6, who also feared and came close to being captured by the Latins: 43.20–30; and see Heisenberg, *Quellen*, 19–20; also, *Phokas*, col. 929, para. 3 (who refers to the dreaded Chasisioi). Theophylact of Ochrid, Stephen Skylitzes, and St. Leontios of Jerusalem also commented on rough seas and seasickness: ed. Gautier, 120.553 (PG 126, col. 484); Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 55; *Skylitzes*, 11.170–172, 13.237–234; Βίος τοῦ ὁσίου Λεοντίου Πατριάρχου Ἱεροσολύμων, in *Λόγοι Πανηγυρικοὶ ἸΔ' τοῦ Μακαρίου Χρυσοκεφάλου* (Cosmopolis, 1793), 380–434, esp. 426–27. On the imagery of ships in storms, see Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, 263–78. Shipwrecks, piracy, and enslavement also featured in the Byzantine romance (see Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance* [note 3]); while the dangers which the legendary Digenes Akrites faced on his travels included ban-

Not quite so immediately life-threatening, but certainly extremely unpleasant, are other experiences recorded by our travelers. Their sense of unease, insecurity, fear, and cultural alienation is expressed symbolically in their texts in terms of repeated attacks on their intellect and on their five senses.

Their eyes, no longer beholding their beloved *patris*, are repeatedly assaulted by frightening and ugly sights. In Mesarites' case the attack becomes also expressly physical: he narrates how after an exhausting day of mule riding he finally reached an inn, where he found food, drink, and a fire—but the room was filled with smoke, which attacked his eyes and made them hurt terribly.¹⁸

It is not the eyes, however, but the mouth that becomes the most frequent symbol for expressing abhorrence of travel. As their journey progresses, our travelers complain that they were unable to let any food or drink pass their lips. Manasses, for instance, found himself unable to drink even water in Palestine: not only is there so little of it, he complained, not only does it stink, not only is it muddy—but one even has to pay for it! In Bulgaria Gregory Antiochos was disgusted by the appalling quality of the fruit, the bread, the wine, and the slimy, rotting fish. He wrote to Eustathios that once out of Sardica he nearly died of starvation, so difficult did he find it to eat or drink anything.¹⁹

The quality of food and drink, and the travelers' inability to take in either, is constantly compared to the situation at home. Food and drink, and eating and drinking, are used as metaphors for the cultural superiority of the Constantinopolitans. In Gregory Antiochos we find the racist side of this feeling of superiority, in his expressions of utter repugnance at the Bulgarians' preference for red meat over fish. In Mesarites we find an example of the class snobbery which also formed part of the metropolitans' feeling of superiority. He tells us that in the tavern's smoke-filled room, travel fatigue and the smoke made him feel so sick that he could neither sleep nor eat or drink. His servant, in contrast, clearly incapable of such delicate responses, first fell into a drunken stupor and then, to Mesarites' disgust, rose in the middle of the night and had a veritable feast of meat, bread, and hot peppered wine.²⁰

In our texts the mouth thus becomes the avenue for expressing cultural difference through what does or does not go *in* it, but also through what does or does not come *out* of it: language. Our highly educated and loquacious travelers are frequently reduced to speechlessness, sometimes through sheer fright (as happens to Manasses and Mesarites), or because they find no one to whom they can address their highly polished Greek. Thus Manasses complained that while in Cyprus, and in the absence of John Kontostephanos, he perforce became "a rhetor without tongue," "a speechless rhetor":

dots, wild beasts, adultery, and murder: J. Mavrogordato, *Digenes Akrites* (Oxford, 1956), 72.102–76.189, 142.1–158.256, 164.42–214.845. Immobile in his *enkleistra*, St. Neophytos the Recluse also warned the married traveler that the sin of adultery formed part of the dangers of traveling: see C. Galatariotou, "Eros and Thanatos: A Byzantine Hermit's Conception of Sexuality," *BMGS* 13 (1989), 95–137, esp. 130.

¹⁸ *Mesarites*, 40.15–21; see also *Manasses*, 333.281–287; and note, e.g., *Mouzalon*, 120.302 ff, 133.779.

¹⁹ *Manasses*, 334.320–326; also 333.290, 334.320, and note 338.129–140; *Antiochos*, I, 279.39–50, 280.63–76; *Antiochos*, II, 65.26–68.145 (esp. 67.99–105).

²⁰ *Antiochos*, I, 280.71–72; *Mesarites*, 40.15–41.26. See also the negative references to eating and drinking in *Mouzalon*, 122.378, 123.414, in contrast to 136.893. On metropolitan class and intellectual snobbery, including contempt for provincials and commoners, see Magdalino in *Byzantine Aristocracy*, ed. Angold; also Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 58–61.

there was, quite simply, no one worth speaking to. On other occasions, crudely speaking fellow travelers cause our travelers to be silent. Mesarites was thus twice reduced to silence, on one occasion by a half-drunken mule driver who gave him a lecture about how wrong he (Mesarites) was to beat the mule so hard. On another occasion his educated Greek, ironically enough, turned into a real life-threatening disadvantage: when he started singing hymns on the way his fellow travelers reacted angrily, calling him “the most unwise and ignorant of men.” They told him to stop this kind of singing at once, for this was a sure way of attracting robbers and bandits. Instead, they advised him, “make your voice coarse and barbaric, speak crudely and incoherently, lash the air with disjointed words, . . . yell out nonsense; do all the things that frighten and restrain those of sinister occupations who lurk waiting.” They invited Mesarites to join them in their crude singing. He remained silent for the rest of the journey, for he neither liked nor knew any of their songs.²¹

The accounts contain many examples of our travelers being subjected to crude, barbaric-sounding language from those they encounter on their trip.²² And it was not only crude human speech that assaulted their ears and closed their mouths, silencing them: Gregory Antiochos’ attempts to speak to his companions in Sardica were drowned in the cacophony of sheep and goats bleating, cows mooing, pigs grunting.²³

Our travelers are thus assailed through their eyes, mouth, and ears; their noses, and sense of smell, are attacked too. Manasses nearly fainted, he says, when a Cypriot, reeking of garlic and wine, stood next to him in church. He twice asked the Cypriot to move away, telling him that he stunk like a sewer; when the Cypriot failed to respond Manasses hit him in the face and thus got rid of him. Mesarites, too, suffered from encounters with merchants reeking of the previous night’s excessive drinking.²⁴

Finally, our travelers’ sense of touch is also attacked. Pirates, for example, subject Mesarites to an extensive and humiliating bodily search.²⁵ More frequently, however, it is nature that assaults our travelers: Manasses felt that the sun in Palestine was so hot that it penetrated his skull; Gregory Antiochos suffered from the constant rain and excessive cold; Mesarites was drenched in heavy rain and attacked by snow and hail that “pelted us like stones,” and while sitting very uncomfortably on a mule, riding on in precarious balance, he was whipped by tree branches.²⁶

By contrast to all these dangers and discomforts, our four metropolitan travelers

²¹ *Manasses*, 327.68–328.76, 337.87–102, 338.119–128, also 346.168–169 (quotes from 337.101, 337.102); *Mesarites*, 37.13–15, 41.27–43.16 (in a relative absence of snobbery of which one suspects, say, Manasses to have been incapable, Mesarites keeps silent partly because he recognizes that the mule driver is right: 43.8–10), 45.25–46.6 (quotes from 45.31–32, 45.35–46.4).

²² E.g., *Mesarites*, 38.25–35, 39.17–40.8, 40.34–41.5, 41.30–42.16, 45.25–46.6; *Mouzalon*, 121.353–122.370, 123.403–414, 127.570–579. Cf. Theophylact’s disgust at the Bulgarian toponymics: ed. Gautier, 48.295, 82.435, 110.531 (PG 126, 321, 416, 472); and Michael Choniates’ dismay at the Athenians’ demotic Greek: ed. Lampros, 44; and see Wilson, *Scholars*, 204–5; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 58–59, 61.

²³ *Antiochos*, I, 280.60–62.

²⁴ *Manasses*, 344.95–345.130, esp. 345.103–118, 345.127, 345.129, also 342.8; *Mesarites*, 39.26–31; see also *Antiochos*, I, 280.72–76; and note the imagery in *Mouzalon*, 129.645–130.649, 139.999. Similarly, Theophylact had hardly set foot in Ochrid when he was assailed by “a deathly stench”: ed. Gautier, 6.147 (PG 126, 308); Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 48.

²⁵ *Mesarites*, 38.5–10.

²⁶ *Manasses*, 333.281–284; *Antiochos*, I, 278.8–24; *Mesarites*, 39.31–40.14 (quote from 40.7).

report insignificantly little that is pleasurable about traveling—and when they do, it is always double-edged.²⁷ In short, our travelers perceive their journeys as very nearly hellish experiences. They tell us that very little—if anything—good went inside them, past the gates of their five senses; but conversely that these gates were attacked, and what penetrated past them was bad, disgusting, terrifying, and ultimately life-threatening.

Not surprisingly, such massive attack, combined with travel fatigue, weakens our travelers' bodily defenses. Becoming ill is almost a *topos* in the Byzantine travel literature of this period.²⁸ There is of course no doubt that traveling, a change of climate and diet, can make one ill. Yet at another level of significance our travelers' physical illness also exists as an expression of their internal mental unease and emotional pain, caused by their removal from their cultural milieu. Physical illness becomes yet another metaphor for their intensely felt cultural alienation. Certainly Manasses, for one, knew that this was the case, for toward the end of his poem he describes his illness and his recovery from it in unequivocally psychosomatic terms. He describes how he lay in bed in Cyprus, feeling very ill, exhausted, and, in the absence of the *sebastos*, culturally isolated; while further, the recent raid on Cyprus by Raymond, count of Tripoli, caused everyone on the island to live in fear. Then, he tells us, the *sebastos* arrived in Cyprus: "Instantly the dizziness which we, the sad ones, suffered, gave way to calmness, to springtime. And if anyone doubts that happiness is a great tonic, let him listen to my words and, having learned, believe them: for the burning, tertiary fever which crushed me for such a long time, instantly fled from me, the minute it knew of the *sebastos*' presence!" Happy in being reunited with the *sebastos*, Manasses recovers at once, in the sure knowledge that at last the time had come for him to return to his beloved and much missed Constantinople.²⁹

All this is not to disregard or belittle the factual reality of the dangers of medieval travel. But it is striking that in the careful, matter-of-fact account of John Phokas, this negative side of traveling found no place in his narrative.³⁰ The negative perception of

²⁷ E.g., Antiochos' compliment concerning Bulgaria's abundant and cheap cheese is immediately negated by his statement that the cheese stunk: *Antiochos*, I, 280.72–76; Manasses' praise of Alexios Doukas for his lavish hospitality (*Manasses*, 336.56–60, 66–69; 338.129–136; 345.131–133) is undermined by his statement that the food and drink offered was useless to a guest too ill and homesick to receive it (*Manasses*, 338.129–145), and by his insinuation that the *doux* was not highly cultured—for why else would Manasses have felt so culturally isolated in Cyprus? *Manasses*, 338.129–145; 337.98–338.110. Note also Manasses' meanness: pleading humility and poverty, he effectively—and publicly—warns his host not to expect his guest to ever reciprocate his hospitality: *Manasses*, 338.133–136.

²⁸ *Manasses*, 335.1–337.83, 339.1–343.35, 344.69–81; *Antiochos*, II, 67.106–112, 68.163–180, 69.206–71.294; *Mesarites*, 39.33–40.1, 40.19–34, 41.19–29, also 44.18–30. Metropolitans falling ill abroad include Theophylact and his brother Demetrios (see Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 54–56), and Stephen Skylitzes who was brought home on a stretcher, hardly recognizable because of his illness, and died shortly afterwards: *Skylitzes*, 12.186–13.247. Of fictional characters, Timarion is the most famous traveler to have fallen severely ill, which caused his Lucianic premature, though also temporary, descent into Hades: *Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione*, ed. R. Romano (Naples, 1974), esp. chs. 11–13.

²⁹ *Manasses*, 344.69–81 (quote from 344.74–81), and see also 335.1–337.83, 339.1–343.35. On Raymond's raid see Horna's introduction in *Manasses*, 315 ff; G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus I* (Cambridge, 1940), 311.

³⁰ John Phokas' fleeting description of his ascent at the monastery of Choziva as "dangerous" because of the steepness of the precipice and the extreme heat is the closest he comes to describing a negative experience while traveling: *Phokas*, col. 950, para. 19.

travel of our other four men, which is expressed with such intensity as to obliterate any positive aspects of traveling, owes much less to the factual realities of traveling and much more to the cultural alienation which they felt when taken out of their immediate, familiar cultural milieu. They underlined this sense of alienation by stressing the difference—that is, to them, the inferiority—of just about everything and everyone they encountered on their journey.³¹ Ironically enough, one of the most powerful messages contained in the accounts of Mouzalon, Manasses, Antiochos, and Mesarites is not that they traveled, but that they were emotionally incapable of leaving Constantinople (or Nicaea).³²

And if cultural bias so extensively influenced these travelers' perceptions, personal bias was at least as important a factor in determining their perceptions of the experience of travel and of the places visited (which, in turn, helped determine the content of their texts). The exploration, below, of the personal level of reality contained in travelers' accounts indicates the importance of this factor. Focusing by way of example on two of our travelers' texts, we shall be subjecting each of them to a close examination whose aim will be to attend to what is individualistic and different about the particular text, as this is expressed especially through internal textual evidence regarding personal bias, the author's psychological mood and state of mind, and any changes thereof. Such information may be expressed explicitly and directly in the text, but it is more commonly communicated implicitly and indirectly: to locate it we need to pay close attention, for example, to the language used; the imagery employed; and asides and statements which, seemingly "trivial" in themselves, reveal assumptions of greater significance when abstracted from their immediate context.

The text of Constantine Manasses provides our first example. Let us re-read his *Hodoiporikon*, searching for any indication of personal bias. In the company of the *sebastos*, Manasses leaves Constantinople on a mission whose aim is so secret that even he does not know it. The journey takes them through Nicaea, Ikonion, Cilicia, Antioch, Sidon, Tyre, Beirut, Ptolemais, and then Samareia. His descriptions of all these places are very brief, but also either very positive or at least neutral: Nicaea, he tells us, boasts a very beautiful position, and the plains he went past were gloriously fertile; Ikonion was very populous; Cilicia's towns were extremely rich and beautiful, and well positioned; Antioch, with Daphne and the Kastalia, was the jewel of all Asia; Samareia was extremely graceful and beautiful, the waters were abundant, the earth fertile—and so

³¹ Predictably, singularly exceptional in this respect was the Holy Land, which every Byzantine—traveler or not—treated with reverence. Manasses' recorded reaction to it is thus also exceptional; yet precisely because he refuses to acknowledge this exception to the rule, his irreverent comments are characteristic—at the communal, cultural level—not of a Constantinopolitan attitude toward the Holy Land in particular, but of the metropolitan attitude toward lands beyond the walls of the Queen City in general. On the other hand, the exceptional nature of Manasses' commentary on Palestine makes it of course also very revealing insofar as his personal state of mind is concerned. See the discussion of the personal level in the *Hodoiporikon*, below.

³² The metropolitans' emotional inability to leave Constantinople was expressed also in their avoidance of physically departing from the Queen City, as Kekaumenos complained regarding emperors and Michael Choniates regarding government officials: see, respectively, ed. Lampros, 83.4–84.8; "Λόγος νοθετητικός," in *Cecaumeni Strategicon*, ed. B. Wassiliewsky and V. Jernstedt (Amsterdam, 1965), 91 ff, esp. 103.18–104.19.

on. Despite his initial despair at the prospect of traveling, the fact that he was on an imperial mission and in the company of a *sebastos* appears to have compensated Manasses for his abhorrence of traveling. Thus, up and until Samareia he gives the impression that he felt the journey was going “so far, so very good.” He described everything in positive terms. He reserved bitter commentary only for Ptolemais, the “killer city”—commentary which, as we saw earlier, was factually justified.³³

Now Samareia is a very important stop for Manasses and the *sebastos*, and for the reader who travels with them. For it is at this point that Manasses reveals to the reader what was in turn revealed to him only when he reached Samareia: the aim of his mission, which was to negotiate a marriage arrangement between Emperor Manuel I Komnenos and Melissenda, the sister of Raymond III of Antioch, count of Tripoli.³⁴ In a long *ekphrasis* Manasses sings Melissenda’s praises. He tells us further that he was overjoyed that he and the *sebastos* had mediated for such a beautiful and noble bride to be given to the Byzantine emperor, and that his hopes were high for a speedy (and no doubt triumphant, for him) return to Constantinople.³⁵

But suddenly the imagery changes. Manasses tells us that wintry winds blew; sea storms were stirred up; dizziness and nausea engulfed him and the *sebastos*; the pair of them were unreasonably delayed.³⁶ It is clear that after Manasses’ initial euphoria and high expectations in Samareia, things went badly wrong. The negotiations, he later informs us, broke down.³⁷ He and the *sebastos* left Samareia empty-handed, having achieved nothing other than the waste of “a lot of time and much labour.”³⁸

Manasses does not expressly tell us what mood he was in when he left Samareia, but this is communicated to the reader through the imagery used and through the way Manasses subsequently perceived everything. After Samareia he visited the holy sites of Palestine. For a short while he pays pious lip service to these sites.³⁹ But Jericho gave him the opportunity to express his mood, and it was a foul one: “In the furnaces of Jericho I was burned alive; I saw a stifling sandy desert, fried, dried up, dead, where the sun’s rays so burned, they penetrated one’s very skull.”⁴⁰ Once Manasses lets go with Jericho, there is no stopping him. He bathed in the River Jordan, but the waters of the river were muddy, murky, undrinkable, of a milky hue, slow moving: he declares the

³³ *Manasses*, 328.77–329.121 (quote from 328.93). We may wonder whether Manasses did indeed see everything in a positive light at the time or whether what he registered in the poem was a later, positive reinterpretation. The latter is much more likely to have been the case given the general tone of the poem and the usual Constantinopolitan attitude toward the provinces. Such a reinterpretation would have served Manasses in either or a mixture of two ways: he either deliberately, consciously chose to include in his poem brief neutral or positive descriptions of the places visited before Samareia so as to provide a dramatic contrast to his subsequent negative experiences; or he felt the subsequent experiences to have been *so* negative that the reinterpretation of the earlier part of his journey as relatively positive was made unconsciously in his mind.

³⁴ *Manasses*, 329.123–330.151. On the marriage negotiations and Raymond’s raid see above, note 29.

³⁵ *Manasses*, 330.152–331.208.

³⁶ *Manasses*, 331.209–217.

³⁷ *Manasses*, 343.46–55.

³⁸ *Manasses*, 331.218.

³⁹ *Manasses*, 331.219–333.279.

⁴⁰ *Manasses*, 333.280–286 (quote from 333.280–284). The reader may wonder whether this was the same Jericho where John Phokas had seen extensive irrigation, cultivated gardens, vineyards, and fruit-bearing trees! *Phokas*, col. 950, para. 20.

Jordan unworthy of being counted among rivers.⁴¹ All the hamlets of Palestine are nothing but arid, dry, hard, dead places. Nazareth is “stifling” and “burnt out”; exasperated, he quotes Nathanael in asking, “what good ever came out of Nazareth?” Indeed, Manasses very nearly rebukes Christ: “What then, Christ, light of eternal light, how for so long could you live in such dry, stifling, burning, deathly places? When I contemplate stifling Nazareth, I am amazed at Your humility. . . .” He continues at length in the same mood: Kapernaum is “abominable”; the water in Palestine is smelly, murky, disgusting to taste; the earth is dead, the heat unbearable, the wind unceasing and scorching. “Indeed,” he says, “the holy places in which the Lord lived as a man are august—but if one excludes the sweet-smelling balsam of the Lord’s miracles, he is certain to liken these places to hard thorns! Truly, there is nothing worth talking about concerning these places!”⁴²

Manasses’ reaction to Palestine is in no way representative of a general Byzantine attitude. For obvious religious-ideological reasons (and in sharp contrast to the general Constantinopolitan attitude to places outside the Queen City), Palestine, perceived as the Holy Land, was the one place on earth about which no pious traveler—whether Constantinopolitan or not—felt free to express loathing, contempt, derision, ridicule.⁴³ Much more representative of a general attitude in this respect is John Phokas, for whom every desert in Palestine is a *hagia eremos*.⁴⁴ And if Manasses could be so uncommonly and blatantly hubristic about Palestine, it comes as no surprise to note that he was also far from enthusiastic about the next place he visited—especially since he only visited it because he fell ill and had to recover somewhere, denoting yet another unbearable delay from his longed-for return home, and separation from the *sebastos*. Thus, ill, frustrated, and exasperated Manasses arrives in Cyprus.⁴⁵ Furthermore, after a short trip to Isauria (where he found Syke a “wild town,” everything about which was “hateful” and “to be spat on”) he returned to Cyprus at a very bad time. For Manuel I Komnenos had in the meantime married Marie, daughter of Constance, princess of Antioch; and the revenge of Melissenda’s brother Raymond took the form of a raid on Cyprus and other lands of the emperor. Manasses’ heart must have sunk even further, not only because—as he tells us—he shared the fear which everybody on the island felt, but also no doubt (though he does not tell us this) because he was, after all, directly implicated in the chain of events that led to the raid.⁴⁶ The news of the arrival of John Kontostephanos in Cyprus was in fact the first good news Manasses had had for some time. The *sebastos*’ arrival makes him happy. As we saw earlier, this change of mood is reflected in his instant recuperation, and it is also immediately reflected in the text: he announces that

⁴¹ *Manasses*, 333.288–293, 334.305–306.

⁴² *Manasses*, 333.294–334.330 (quotes from 334.327, 334.310, 334.300–301; 333.294–334.328; 334.309, 334.311–316).

⁴³ Reactions to Palestine were culturally so rigidly prescribed that as a rule pious travelers would not venture into articulating strongly negative feelings about the Holy Land; and indeed it is quite possible that to the pious pilgrim such thoughts would not have been consciously admissible in the first place. See also note 31, above.

⁴⁴ *Phokas*, e.g., col. 960, para. 28; and note also Kazhdan’s insistence on the personal nature of Manasses’ perception of Palestine: Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 153–54.

⁴⁵ *Manasses*, 335.7–336.65.

⁴⁶ *Manasses*, 343.36–344.71 (quotes from 343.39–40).

he is now going to tell us a funny story, and he narrates the incident with the Cypriot who stood next to him in church, reeking of garlic and wine, whom Manasses hit. He considered this to be a funny story.⁴⁷

This episode has been repeatedly cited by modern scholars (of whom Cyril Mango was the first) as representative of the general cultural Constantinopolitan attitude specifically toward the Cypriots.⁴⁸ Yet an indication that this is not so, and that such an incident belongs to the personal rather than the cultural sphere, is contained in the text itself. For Manasses ends his little “funny” story with a very telling line: “and that was that, even if some might disapprove.”⁴⁹ Thus, Manasses clearly indicated that he knew that he was not representative, and that he expected at least some members of his Constantinopolitan aristocratic audience to find his behavior in Cyprus unacceptable or at least in very poor taste.

Some of Manasses’ comments regarding Cyprus have also been taken by modern commentators (following, again, Cyril Mango) as representative of what is supposed to have been a totally negative Constantinopolitan attitude toward Cyprus. It is pointed out in this respect that Manasses complained that Cyprus was a cultural desert, that it stank bitterly, that it was like a prison from which escape was difficult because of the pirates who infested her waters.⁵⁰ But such Byzantinists as are pointing out only these passages are doing the text a disservice. For Manasses also calls Cyprus “famous” and “the greatest of all islands”; he mentions three of her towns without any derogatory comment (he only says that one of them—Trimithoussia—was “poor”); he testifies that the air in Cyprus is healthy; that she is the subject of hymns; that hers is a fertile, rich-bearing soil. Furthermore, he clearly indicated that he knew that his negative comments were subjective rather than representative of a general anti-Cypriot attitude: as he put it, “she is *kypeiron* [a sweet-smelling marshplant] to others, but to me, she is *Kypros*.”⁵¹

Now let us consider for a moment Manasses’ dark mood after his failed mission in Samareia, further aggravated by his parting from the *sebastos*, his cultural loneliness in Cyprus, his illness, his homesickness, and the raid of Raymond, and put his negative comments back into their proper textual context, together, that is, with his positive comments and his explicit statement that this was his own subjective, personal perception. Compare what he says about Cyprus to what he says about Palestine which was, after all, the Holy Land; take into consideration, finally, his own awareness that at least some of his aristocratic friends in Constantinople would disapprove of his conduct to-

⁴⁷ *Manasses*, 344.72–345.133 (esp. 344.76–94 for the change of mood).

⁴⁸ C. Mango, “Chypre, Carrefour du Monde Byzantin,” *XV^e Congrès International d’Études Byzantines, Rapports et co-rapports*, V/5 (Athens, 1976), 3–13, esp. 9–11, repr. in idem, *Byzantium and its Image* (London, 1984), pt. xvii; and see, e.g., M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire (1025–1204). A Political History* (London-New York, 1984), 276–77; B. Egglezakes, ‘Ο ὁσιος Νεόφυτος ὁ Ἐγκλειστος καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ τῆς ἐν Κύπρῳ Φραγκοκρατίας, Ἑπετηρίς Κέντρου Ἐπιστημονικῶν Ἑρευνῶν 10 (1979–80), 31–83, esp. 31, follows Mango in treating Manasses’ account of Cyprus as wholly negative but also warns against considering Manasses as entirely “representative.”

⁴⁹ . . . καὶ τοῦτο μὲν τοιοῦτο, καὶ μὲν μοι τοῦτο: *Manasses*, 345.130.

⁵⁰ *Manasses*, 337.89–338.111 (cultural desert), 342.8 (stinking), 346.153–347.186 (prison surrounded by pirates). For bibliography see above, note 48.

⁵¹ *Manasses*, 336.63 (famous), 339.18 (greatest island), 342.14–15 (towns), 336.64 (healthy air), 337.84 (subject of hymns), 337.85 (fertile), 337.86: ἄλλοις κύπειρον οὖσαν, ἀλλ’ ἐμοὶ Κύπρον. Mouzalon also puns on Κύπρος–κύπειρος, but also on Κύπρος–κόπρος: *Mouzalon*, 139.99–100.

ward the Cypriot in church. Once we consider all this it becomes clear that contrary to the currently prevailing scholarly interpretation, Manasses' impressions of Cyprus were mixed rather than wholly unfavorable; that his attitude was not representative of a supposed general, totally negative Constantinopolitan attitude specifically toward the island and its people; that in so far as the negative comments and attitude expressed in the *Hodoiporikon* are concerned, the particularly strong degree of animosity against Cyprus and the Cypriots was above all determined not by cultural bias but by Manasses' own personal bias, which is not only clearly if implicitly in the text, but which the author himself explicitly admits.

Certainly, Manasses' *Hodoiporikon* contains elements of factual reality. Certainly, it also reflects cultural bias—though not specifically toward Cyprus. The cultural bias that the *Hodoiporikon* reflects exists within the context of the negative cultural bias, which—with the obvious exception of the Holy Land—the Constantinopolitans commonly manifested against everything and everybody outside Constantinople (or Nicaea). They looked down on all the provinces, and Cyprus formed no exception to the rule. But equally clearly, beyond the basic ever-present bias against all provinces there were widely different degrees in the metropolitans' animosity against the provincials. Feelings ranged from patronizing snobbery (toward, say, a province with Greek-speaking Orthodox inhabitants) to undisguised and unadulterated aggression (in the eleventh century, for instance, toward a province inhabited by Armenian Monophysites).⁵² Within this comparative context there are indications that Cyprus might have actually fared somewhat better than other provinces in the Constantinopolitans' estimation. These indications include, as we just saw, Manasses' own positive comments, and especially his references to others' eulogistic commentary on Cyprus, to which he clearly contrasts his own negative utterances.⁵³ Thus close reading of the *Hodoiporikon* indicates that it can-

⁵² Feelings concerning a specific province were likely to change from time to time according to the circumstances. For instance, it would be hardly surprising if feelings toward a province became much more negative immediately following a rebellion against Constantinople. Note, in this respect, that in the *Mousai* of Alexios I Komnenos (uncertainly ascribed to the emperor but certainly written at the end of his reign) it is the people of Cyprus who are accused of rebelling against the emperor, through a reference to "the Cypriots flouting the rule of law." By contrast, Anna Komnena, writing her *Alexiad* at a later date, is much more lenient toward the Cypriots, even on the occasion of a revolt against her idealized father: she personalizes that same 1092 rebellion as the work of the island's governor, Rapsomates, and clearly implies that the people of Cyprus were driven to support the rebel by the corrupt and oppressive behavior of top imperial officials on the island. See, respectively, "Die Musen des Kaisers Alexios I.," ed. P. Maas, *BZ* 22 (1913), 348–69, esp. 357.295; Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*, ed. B. Leib, 3 vols. (Paris, 1937–45), esp. II, 164.10–15.

⁵³ There is no doubt that in the 11th and 12th centuries Cyprus suffered from tax extortions, corrupt and occasionally ruthless administration, military inefficiency, and, consequently, devastating raids. Mouzalon's account of the conditions in Cyprus was obviously highly personal, but the gist of his accusations is supported by other evidence, including that of St. Neophytos the Recluse. However, this state of affairs was in no way confined to the island: all contemporary reports from Byzantine provinces present this depressing picture. By contrast, hints of a relatively high regard for Cyprus may be contained not only in Manasses' *Hodoiporikon*, but also in the evidence of an economic and demographic expansion taking place on the island in the 11th and 12th centuries, and in the evidence regarding the exceptionally high number of churches and monasteries founded and/or decorated on the island in this period. The surviving decoration of some of these institutions is of a sufficiently high standard to have tempted scholars to assume the importation of Constantinopolitan artists on the island. This has been disputed, but indisputable remains the fact that the increased number of patrons in this period included Constantinopolitan officials posted

not be used to substantiate a claim that Cyprus was particularly disliked by Constantinople, but that on the contrary it contains information which suggests that—always comparatively speaking—the opposite might have been the case. The misunderstanding of the text arose out of readings which did not differentiate between the factual, the cultural, and the personal levels of reality contained in the poem. For, cultural and factual realities apart, the *Hodoiporikon* also tells us about its traveler's changes of mood and about his personal biases. This third element, of the personal subjective perception, is of crucial importance in understanding the text—for it is awareness of this factor that allows us to know that Manasses' perception of Cyprus was on the whole not much more factually true or culturally representative than was his perception of Palestine.

Manasses was certainly not the only traveler whose account was crucially influenced by his personal perception of reality. Our second example is provided by Gregory Antiochos.

Gregory's two letters have been combed for factual information concerning Bulgaria; they have been treated as representative of the general Constantinopolitan cultural attitude toward the Bulgarians; the style in which they were written has come under attack, drawing derisive comments concerning what is considered to be its futile, empty rhetoric.⁵⁴ But these letters can make very different reading indeed. Alexander Kazhdan, who has done so much to bring Antiochos to the attention of Byzantinists, has pointed out in his incisive study of Gregory that these letters are very subjective, and that they contain an expression—unique in the twelfth century—of intense interest in nature.⁵⁵ In the light of these remarks we may wonder, re-reading these letters, whether this interest in nature does not also encompass an intense interest in the natural microcosm of the self. For close reading of these letters reveals that they contain a wealth of information regarding Gregory's perception of his own self and his state of mind when he wrote them.

Already in the first letter Gregory is a very unhappy man. What his mind's eye perceives is at all levels very ugly, unpleasant, and even unnatural. Yet a change of mood emerges upon comparison of the two letters, indicating that by the time he was writing his second letter Gregory had slid from a state of relatively mild depression to one of deep depression, akin to despair. Indeed he indicates this shift clearly at the beginning and the end of his second letter: he starts this letter with bitter self-mockery, self-pity, and self-reproach, coupled with the belief that things have gone so wrong that he expects nothing good to happen to him any more; and toward its end he tells Eustathios that this was a letter drenched in tears.⁵⁶

In between the beginning and the end of this second letter it is the imagery Gregory

on the island. Such special interest on the part of metropolitan officials during their usually brief periods of office in Cyprus cannot be adequately explained by the island's increased strategic importance in this period. For discussion and bibliography concerning all the above points, see C. Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. chs. 3, 8–10.

⁵⁴ See Darrouzès' introduction in *Antiochos, I*, 276–78; and his notes, e.g., *Antiochos, I*, 281–84, esp. 281 (5), 283 (8, 9); *Antiochos, II*, 74–86, esp. 79 (7).

⁵⁵ Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, 196–223, esp. 219–20.

⁵⁶ *Antiochos, II*, 65.1–66.84 (note esp. 65.12–15), 72.358–361.

chooses that expresses his intensified personal suffering. In the first letter he had spoken of the Bulgarian sky weeping, mourning over the arid land; of the fruit being brought in the country bruised and wrinkled, like long-suffering prisoners, imprisoned in their baskets; of the bread being inexpertly baked, and thus full of ashes. In the second letter the imagery has become funereal: the bread is only fit for the funeral table, it is only fit for the dead; the fruit now come out of their baskets as though from a tomb, emaciated like corpses from the grave.⁵⁷

There is a deepening sense of abandonment and hopelessness, expressed, for example, through the changing depiction of the most primary of human relationships, that of mother and child. In the first letter, Gregory introduces the image of a child who has been lost, but whose mother roams the earth, trying to find her lost child. It is the image of Demeter, searching for Persephone: an anxiety-ridden image, but also one which contains hope and the warmth that comes from the implicit message that the mother cares and that the child is wanted—this is a child lost, but not abandoned. By contrast, when in the second letter the image of mother and child is reintroduced, it is possessed of a very different emotional content. Mother and child are depicted locked in a relationship which has become mutually violent, hateful, persecutory, and hopeless: Gregory's image now is of a child who has turned against his mother, and of a mother who in turn hates her child, refuses to care for him, rejects him, and, further, exposes him like a bastard offspring, without food or drink, so that he will die.⁵⁸

The second letter contains telling hints that it is himself that Gregory perceived as having been not only lost but also—and much more painfully—abandoned. For example, being away from his family and friends “is for me the ultimate suffering—but whether *they* suffer for not seeing me, I do not know,” he writes. He fears that the addressee of his letters, his old tutor, may have also abandoned him, for it appears from the content of this letter that Gregory had yet to receive a letter from Eustathios.⁵⁹

A sense of isolation was already expressed in the first letter, when Gregory described—not without a sense of humor—how his attempts to speak to his traveling companions were frustrated because of external factors, his words being drowned by the cacophonous cries of animals. In the second letter, however, he writes that he was wrenched away and brought “here to wander alone”—the isolation now clearly referring to an internal, emotional one, since physically he was of course in the company of many men.⁶⁰

A sense of loss, and mourning for it, was, again, already conveyed in the first letter, where Gregory stated that he missed terribly his father and family, his friends, his books, and Eustathios; the food, the wine, the changes of the seasons in Constantinople. By the second letter his sense of loss is so greatly intensified that the absence even of Sardica—derided in the first letter—is now mourned.⁶¹

⁵⁷*Antiochos, I*, 278.13–279.16, 279.39–50, 280.63–65; *Antiochos, II*, 65.26–33, 66.67–69 (see also 69.208–210). The difference is all the more striking in view of the fact that the relevant passages in the second letter supposedly summarize the passages in the first.

⁵⁸*Antiochos, I*, 9.32–34; *Antiochos, II*, 68.148–158.

⁵⁹*Antiochos, II*, 71.296–299, 71.311–73.398; and see 86 (12). Note Michael Choniates' similar complaint to Eustathios: ed. Lampros, 2–3, 6; Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, 124–25.

⁶⁰*Antiochos, I*, 280.60–62; *Antiochos, II*, 71.311–312.

⁶¹*Antiochos, I*, 278.2–8 and the rest of the letter by implication; *Antiochos, II*, 66.69–84.

And if Gregory felt abandoned and alone, if he felt that the world was closing in on him, looking inward afforded him no consolation. For internally, he is torn asunder. He expresses this in physical terms. Already in his first letter the wine pierces his stomach like a lance.⁶² In the second letter, however, such metaphors cease to be occasional and reminiscent of many a similar metaphor used by our other travelers. They are turned instead into many, insistent and long passages of a particularly violent content: his palate is torn; his throat shredded; bread falls down his throat like a rough stone violently hurled; it gets stuck in his throat and all but suffocates him, making his eyes look as though they are just about to pop out of their sockets; he suffers like Kronos, swallowing stones; he feels as though his teeth have all been wrenched out and fallen into the pit of his stomach. “Barbaric illness,” he says, “invades the small town of our body, takes over the akropolis of the head, takes us alive like prisoners to a distant land, away from health and beyond the borders; or, having pierced our heart most painfully with lances or cut up our liver with a most painful sword, all but snatches our very life away.”⁶³

Further, in passages where the boundaries between internal and external reality, fact and myth, appear to have collapsed, Gregory expresses his tremendous anxiety: because he has abandoned the pursuit of learning, books, and rhetoric, and is now forced to be constantly preoccupied with illogical animals (the company’s horses and mules), he fears that he shall be completely destroyed. His preoccupation with horses will devour him—just like horses themselves, he believes, devour humans: “If you hear that Diomedes was devoured by horses, do not think this but an untrue myth: consider our situation here, and you will see that the story is not far from the truth. For just as ‘feelings of the heart can crush bones’ and the preoccupations of the mind devour and consume limbs, thus it is also with us: (. . .) the horses monstrously sink their sharp teeth inside us, and go all the way through us until they resurface outside: thus they truly devour the flesh of the human body, and feast on human flesh and limbs, not stopping even after they had their fill.” Later, he returns to this harrowing image: “Thus all-changing Time conjured up before our eyes the spectacle of that mythical and unbelievable story—about man-eating horses—and removed from it the affectation of elegant monstrosity, and proved it to be true.”⁶⁴

It is significant that earlier Gregory had talked of illness taking over his head, destroying his heart, taking him beyond the bounds. For the illness he fears is tearing him asunder is not a physical illness but one of the heart and mind. The bounds he fears he might cross are those between sanity and insanity. The horse that might devour him is he, himself: “If, when reading poetry, you come across men who were half-horse, do not bother searching to find who they were: they are *us*, here. If you did not know this, learn it now!”⁶⁵

⁶² *Antiochos*, I, 280.65–67.

⁶³ *Antiochos*, II, 67.90–124 (quote from 67.107–112).

⁶⁴ *Antiochos*, II, 70.242–249, 71.292–295.

⁶⁵ *Antiochos*, II, 70.240–242. Note the difference in intensity of feeling between Gregory’s fear of being turned into an animal and Theophylact’s and—more surprisingly—Michael Choniates’ statements that by living for a long time in, respectively, Bulgaria and Athens, they feared they might be turned into barbarians: ed. Gautier, 34.243 (= PG 126, 396); ed. Lampros, 44; and see Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, 58, 61; M. Mullett, “The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter,” in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham, 1981), 75–93, esp. 92–93.

There, then, Gregory stands: both devoured and devouring; both victim and aggressor; half-man, half-illogical animal. Quite a far cry from his first letter, when it was the Bulgarians who were described in terms denoting an uncivilized, almost animal existence. It was they who went around dressed in animals' furs, sheepskins, and felt hats, who lived in stifling thatched-roofed hovels, who were as inexpert in the civilized art of building as a child.⁶⁶ Now it is he, Gregory, who is being turned into an animal, losing his civilized self. This is really what his sense of loss is referring to; this is really what Gregory is mourning over. His feelings of reproach, rejection, abandonment, loss, and mourning are in truth directed toward his own self, for he feels that he, above all others, has betrayed and abandoned his own, true self.⁶⁷ Gregory feels that he has betrayed his true potential, which was "from infancy," as he put it, to be a man of letters—not a soldier.⁶⁸ In very long and very painful passages he contrasts his two selves, full of self-reproach for not succeeding in remaining true to his destiny. Yet at the same time he is also at a loss to explain why he has done so: "I do not know why," he repeatedly says.⁶⁹ And he introduces the image of a donkey, tied up at the end of a wooden pole, going round and round in circles, blindfolded so that he does not see the pathetic and futile state he is in. This is how he is too, he says: "thus we are dim-sighted when we look inside us, the eyes of our heart totally blindfolded, so that we would not realize that we are totally condemned."⁷⁰

Unable to understand what has gone wrong in his life, or how it came about that he, destined to be an intellectual, now finds himself having no choice but to go on pursuing a job which he hates and which is the very negation of his true self;⁷¹ and feeling that he gets more and more out of touch with this true self by the day, Gregory is a man in the grip of one terrifying fear: that he is going mad. He expresses this in unequivocal terms: "Truly, I have lost my senses, I am indeed no longer sane, I have become a maniac like Xerxes." Immediately preceding and following this statement, Gregory's second letter is flooded with images of madness; and the horses, with whom he had earlier identified, also go mad in the text.⁷²

As Kazhdan has shown, it is also clear from Gregory's other writings that he always felt that he failed to fulfill his true potential, that he was stuck—in the wrong job, the wrong place, the wrong self; and it is equally clear that he never really felt comfortable

⁶⁶ *Antiochos, I*, 279.25–27, 280.77–81.

⁶⁷ The terms and concept of the "true" and "false self" were first introduced in psychoanalytical literature by Donald Winnicott. The psychological state to which they refer was subsequently further explored by other psychoanalysts. See D. Winnicott, "The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship," in his *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment* (London, 1972), 37–55; and for recent commentary and bibliography, C. Bollas, *Forces of Destiny: Psychoanalysis and Human Idiom* (London, 1989), 7–22, 168.

⁶⁸ *Antiochos, II*, 68.167–169, 69.199–205, 70.235–236.

⁶⁹ *Antiochos, II*, 65.1–15, 68.163–70.249, 71.299–72.357 (quotes from 65.9, 68.181–69.182, 69.206, 71.298).

⁷⁰ *Antiochos, II*, 71.313–72.332 (quote from 72.326–328).

⁷¹ As Gregory wrote (with immediate reference to the inedible bread which he had to swallow or starve, but also with obvious wider implications) "we desire what we hate, and develop an appetite for what disgusts us": *Antiochos, II*, 67.99–101. On Gregory's "voluntary servitude" see Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, 205–6.

⁷² *Antiochos, II*, 69.206–210, 69.216–70.240 (quote from 69.216–217), 70.254–71.278, 72.326–332. Note especially the words referring to a state of insanity in 66.53–54, 69.206, 69.216–218, 70.231, 70.236–237, 70.259, 70.262–263, 69.276–71.277, 325.328.

with the members of Eustathios of Thessaloniki's charmed circle, whose members he envied bitterly.⁷³ But it was in Bulgaria, under the stress and strain of traveling, that these feelings engulfed him, devoured him—as he would put it—and made him feel torn to pieces, not really by the food and the drink but by his own desperately unhappy, split self.

There is only one hope for Gregory, only one way in which he feels he can get in touch again with his true, civilized self. And that hope is Eustathios. He is the perfect candidate to become Gregory's savior, in the latter's mind, precisely because it is Eustathios who, more than anybody else, best knows Gregory's civilized self. Eustathios is idealized by Gregory to a degree corresponding to Gregory's despair. In a long passage Gregory describes Eustathios as God, who breathed the life of knowledge and civilization into Gregory. Among other things Gregory tells Eustathios: "You made a human being out of mud, (. . .) an animal that has speech and is ruled by reason";⁷⁴ and the latter—reason—is precisely what Gregory fears he is now losing. Eustathios becomes Gregory's umbilical cord to life for he is, in Gregory's fantasy, the one and only person who has the power to dispel the death that is madness and instill in Gregory anew the life of civilization and sanity, through getting him back in touch with the true, civilized self Gregory has abandoned.

In a moving passage, Gregory asks Eustathios not to disbelieve his words, for he wrote them in pain ("I wrote this letter with tears rather than ink"); nor to criticize him for having "trespassed by far" the proper lengths and content of a letter: he did this not out of ignorance of the rules of letter writing, but because he hoped that in this way Eustathios would know his former pupil's sorrow, and relieve him of it. The main purpose of his letter, Gregory tells Eustathios, is that Eustathios will write to him, give him the security of his blessing, send him the sweet medicine which will cure Gregory's pain, relieve his hunger, quench his thirst. . . .⁷⁵

Reading Gregory's letters at the personal level, as I have tried to do above, the charge that they are full of "empty rhetoric" itself appears empty. It seems rather to be the case that scholars who read Gregory's letters being interested only in the factual and cultural realities in them, missed a very substantial point. When Darrouzès commented that the country Gregory described was more reminiscent of the Sahara than of the Balkans, he seems not to have paid sufficient attention to Gregory's own words toward the desperate ending of his second letter to Eustathios: "I beg you (. . .), do not leave me to die of thirst *in the middle of this arid desert* (. . .); instead, write to me—your letters will, like water from a well, relieve me from the drought."⁷⁶ The desert which Gregory

⁷³ Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, 196–223, esp. 199, 205–6, 213.

⁷⁴ *Antiochos*, II, 71.296–313; also 72.358–73.398 (quote from 71.304–307).

⁷⁵ *Antiochos*, II, 72.358–73.398. It is possible that Gregory's expressed interest in nature may have formed part of an effort to "woo" Eustathios by writing of a subject close to Eustathios' heart. Compare, in this respect, Gregory's erotically charged description of fruit, including "Persian apples" (peaches) (*Antiochos*, II, 65.37–66.59) with Eustathios' proud references to his peaches (the best in the city!) and other agricultural and horticultural produce from his own land; while Eustathios' strong preference for the home-produced as opposed to that which changes hands and is sold at the market might have prompted some of Gregory's negative remarks concerning imported, bought fruit: *Antiochos*, I, 279.39–50; *Antiochos*, II, 66.66–68; *Eustathius of Thessalonica*, *Opuscula*, ed. G. L. F. Tafel (Frankfurt, 1832), 308.55–61, 346.50–51, 335.42–48; and see Kazhdan and Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, 163; Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 37, 30.

⁷⁶ *Antiochos*, II, 73.390–396.

so painfully traversed and described was indeed located not in the Balkans but within the tormented topographical confines of his heart and mind. In his letters he frequently expressed his feelings by projecting on the external world his own internal desolation and despair. To take Gregory's words as only referable to external and collectively perceived realities, to miss the personal which he so frequently dressed in the guise of the factual or the cultural, is to read his letters with a sight severely impaired.

This is of course not to suggest that factual reality is totally absent from Gregory's letters; nor to ignore the cultural preoccupations of his letters—though the latter have much more to do with the way in which he used culturally acceptable media of communication (such as rhetoric, or the letter) to express his feelings, than with the way in which he perceived Bulgaria. For even though there is no doubt that the Constantinopolitans looked down on the Bulgarians (and almost certainly much more so than on Greek-speaking provincials), the exploration of the personal level of reality contained in Gregory's letters strongly indicates that, of all the candidates for the role of "representative" of the opinions of the metropolitan elite about Bulgaria, Gregory is surely the least suitable: his state of mind when writing these letters was simply too disturbed, too wrapped up in depression and near despair to allow him to be much of a spokesman for anyone other than himself. Above all, Gregory used whatever factual information his mind could still perceive, and every cultural trick in the book, to talk about himself. Of our travelers' accounts, Gregory Antiochos' is a monumental example of an account of an inward rather than an outward journey; and of the desperate attempt of a man at the brink of madness to appeal to his one remaining link with his civilized, sane self—this link being his old tutor.

The scope of this paper precluded detailed discussion of the personal level in the accounts of Mouzalon and Mesarites, while other material relevant to a comprehensive study of Byzantine travel literature was confined to the footnotes. This does not, however, prejudice the drawing of the following conclusions.

Of our travelers' accounts John Phokas' is the most overwhelmingly factual; Gregory Antiochos' the most overwhelmingly personal; while Mouzalon, Manasses, and Mesarites wrote accounts in which the personal, the cultural, and the factual are—in varying degrees—more evenly present. Perhaps the most striking observation to be made on the basis of the preceding discussion is the great extent to which (with the exception of John Phokas) our travelers' perceptions of their journeys were so highly biased, whether by cultural or personal considerations, or both. Mouzalon, Manasses, Gregory Antiochos, and Mesarites tell us comparatively little that can be taken at face value and relied upon as "objective fact" concerning the places and people they encountered in their travels. Thus, the researcher who reads Byzantine travelers' accounts hoping for very substantial amounts of factual information is likely to be disappointed. In recompense, our travelers' accounts speak volumes about their authors' personal and collectively held mentalities, attitudes, biases, feelings. Our metropolitan travelers tell us that Constantinople (or Nicaea) is their *patris*, and that everyone who dwells outside the Queen City is, in varying degrees, a foreigner, and, therefore, in their eyes, culturally inferior. Each one tells us about his cultural milieu and about the ways in which he related to it (including his emotional near-total inability to exist outside it), about his relationship with

the person or persons to whom he primarily addressed his writings, about the way in which he perceived and related to his own self, about his feelings, his state of mind, his psychological moods. Our metropolitan travelers' accounts are rich and complicated documents, and it is precisely their complexity that makes them fascinating and—of this I am sure—subject to more than one interpretation.

This study focused on a group of Byzantine travelers, but there are two ways in which its implications are wider than the perimeters of the immediate dossier of source material might suggest. First, as far as cultural perceptions are concerned, some of the conclusions of the preceding discussion can be used to further our understanding of Byzantine cultural perceptions in general—concerning, for example, the Byzantine concept of *patris*; or aspects of the way in which Constantinopolitans perceived and related to the Queen City and the provinces of the empire.⁷⁷ Second, this study also used the five travelers' texts as a testing ground for a general methodological approach which could be applied to other Byzantine works of literature. As was said at the beginning of this paper, the task of exploring the factual, cultural, and personal levels of reality contained in texts, and of trying to establish the interrelationship between them, is neither easy nor even always possible. But when it is possible—as is frequently the case—it is, I believe, a task well worth pursuing, for it allows us to gain a fuller and deeper understanding of Byzantine literary texts and of the cultural and personal identities of the authors who produced them. Further, the future researcher who ventures in these and related areas need not—for once!—lament the “lack of source material”: a wealth of information lies buried in and between the lines of our already available Byzantine texts, still waiting to be discovered. Finally, a reading process such as the one followed in this paper is also likely to lead us, incidentally, to challenge current scholarly perceptions of these texts and to suggest different—and, it is hoped, more fruitful—ways of reading them.

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⁷⁷ This paper presents only aspects of both these complex issues. On the Byzantines' concept of *patris* see further, e.g., P. Magdalino, “Honour among Romaioi: The Framework of Social Values in the World of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos,” *BMGS* 13 (1989), 183–218, who suggests instances (perhaps significantly drawn from the work of the *provincial* Kekaumenos) in which *patris* is conceived of in the wider sense of the “fatherland” rather than the hometown. Concerning the relationship between the Constantinopolitans and the provincials, while the whole subject still awaits its comprehensive researcher, the—mostly incidental—results of research so far indicate that the relationship was a very complex one, and that it would be as wrong to assume that the Constantinopolitans felt nothing but contempt for the provincials as to surmise that in return the provincials felt nothing but resentment toward Constantinople. See, e.g., on the metropolitans' side, J. Herrin, “Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas and Peloponnesos, 1180–1205,” *DOP* 29 (1975), 253–84; Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, ch. 2; and on the provincials' side, Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint*, esp. chs. 9–10. See also my earlier comments in this paper, concerning different degrees of Constantinopolitan animosity toward the provincials.